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To: microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov
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Subject: Microsoft Comments

One remedy that I think is very important to enhancing competition that has not been discussed widely in the press is
the following:

Microsoft should publish the detailed formats for the files generated by their office suite programs. Any future changes
in these formats should be published at least 4 months in advance of selling updates with format changes.

For example, Word produces .DOC files, Excel produces .XLS files, etc. The format of these files is not published and
other competitors must use reverse engineering to figure them out. This process is usually imperfect resulting in less
than full compatibility.

Ideally one should be able to take a .DOC file that someone has written using Microsoft Word, view it and edit it in a
competing product (e.g. Lotus WordPro or WordPerfect) and send in back to the originator who is using Microsoft
Word. Similarly for .XLS spreadsheed files or .PPT (Microsoft Powerpoint), and so on.

With this approach we could have transparency of format allowing use of competing office suite products with full
compatibility.

        Thanks for your consideration,

        Nathan Liskov

P.S. Microsoft should also be required to provide backward compatiblity translators so that we will not be required to
upgrade each office product each time an upgrade comes out. As it is, Microsoft uses this incompatibility technique
to force its customers to continually upgrade, paying for the same program over and over again.

I don't do Windows!
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